

MY ROAD TO JANUARY 30, 1933

By ANONYMOUS

January 30, 1933, the day when Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, is one of the decisive historical dates of our time. We wish to remember this event by an account of personal experiences from the period leading up to that date rather than by a historical review.

The author wishes to remain anonymous in order to emphasize that he is not speaking about himself but about the movement as a whole.—K.M.

MY road to January 30, 1933, is nothing but a replica, or one version, of the same road that tens of thousands of equally unknown Party members have trod. It is of them that I should like to tell when I speak of myself.

What was it that induced me, that induced us, during the twenties to become a National-Socialist, to see in Adolf Hitler the coming leader of all Germans, and to join the National-Socialist German Workers' Party?

Every one of us who took this step closed a door behind him which he could never open again. Either he was ready to follow Adolf Hitler unconditionally, or he had to be prepared to fall by the wayside as a weakling or even as a traitor, a victim to the laughter, not only of our enemies, but also of ourselves. To become a member of the National-Socialist Party was not like joining any other party in Germany. It

was not enough to pay one's fees punctually and for the rest to go one's own way. Money was something most of us had very little of. Our principal contribution was our belief in Adolf Hitler, in his, in our movement, and in Germany. This belief roused in us the fanatic determination to convert the German people to National-Socialism and to clear the path to the head of the nation for Adolf Hitler with every means in our power.

THE GREAT WAR

Like so many of my old Party comrades, I was a small boy at school when the Great War broke out. Huge crowds demonstrated in the streets of the large provincial town in Germany in which we lived. They expressed loud rejoicing and emotion at the fact that the German Government had decided to fight against the strangling encirclement of its enemies. When my father saw one of these crowds of demonstrators ap-



proaching, he took me by the hand and joined it. Our procession ended at a big square, where a Protestant clergyman was addressing the crowds. Then we all loudly repeated the Lord's Prayer.

A few days later my mother wept. She told me that Father was going the next day to the front in France. I did not understand my mother's tears and was very proud of Father. We were living at that time in a big house in which our neighbors were almost all workmen and small tradesmen with their families. The young men, fathers of families and sons, were, of course, all soldiers. I often played with the children in their poorly furnished flats. In school, our old teacher told us a lot about the victories of our soldiers and the greatness of our Kaiser. For us children, the Kaiser was the sublime personification of our childlike patriotism. When we saw soldiers marching through the streets to the station to go to the front, we often ran along with them and never got tired of it. We wanted to be just like them.

The years passed. Once a year Father came home on leave, and we proudly fetched him from the station. Otherwise we wrote each other field-post letters. Mother worried a great deal about him and about us. Food got scarcer and poorer. During one winter we had almost nothing but turnips. In front of the food shops there were often long queues, with Mother or one of us children standing in them. At the high school to which I started going during the war, many of the pupils of the higher classes went around in soldiers' uniforms. They were considered demigods by us, and we younger boys had absolutely no say. Sometimes a young teacher would return from the front in uniform, and we could never hear enough of what he had to tell us. These men would be the victors against Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Russians—there was no doubt whatever about that among us boys.

THE BITTER END

Then Father returned from the front for the last time. He told us that he did not need to go back, for everything was over and lost. Germany's defeat imprinted itself deeply on my young soul. When we walked with him in the streets, we saw many soldiers and civilians with red armbands and red cockades.

Famine and civil war came to our town too. Father joined the civic defense which had been formed against the Reds, and communicated his hatred for them to us. At school there were fights between those who hated the Reds and those who defended them. In the circle of our family and our friends, the avalanche of political events was always the subject of lively discussion. We boys soon began to take part in these discussions and often believed that we knew more than our fathers.



One day I met a boy who was on a visit from Western Germany. He told us about the French who were occupying his home town although the war had been over for several years, and sowed in me seeds of bitter anger. My friends and I read with enthusiasm newspaper reports about brave men who would not put up with everything the French were doing. All the more incomprehensible seemed to me the great army of those who so often marched behind red flags, carrying placards with antinational inscriptions. I hated them. On November 9 especially, the day of the Red revolt of 1918, and on May 1, International Labor Day, one demonstration after another flowed past us. Red flags and more red flags. The placards bore slogans of civil war and class hatred, but there was never a word about Germany and her national misfortune. That increased our rage.

WHAT DID WE WANT?

At that time, we young fellows who hated the Red mob did not know our-

selves what we really wanted. I often thought of the miserable workmen's flats that I had seen and of the poverty in which so many Germans lived. The social slogans on the placards of the Red demonstrators seemed to me by no means lacking in sense; but their association with Communism and denial of patriotism was something I could not understand. Yet it seemed just as incredible to me that the so-called "national" parties did not organize similar demonstrations and drive off the Reds.

In school, where we often discussed these things among each other and with our teachers, tolerance for "those that thought otherwise" was preached. Although scarcely any of my teachers were Red, most of them were indifferent, while many were "liberal" or "democratic" and sought to find a synthesis between that which was good of the old and that which was good of the new. Even the so-called "national" teachers hardly ever risked talking openly. They were either too cowardly to do this or too embittered; for, not without justification, they felt they had been cheated of the victory for which most of them had fought for years. Conflicting emotions crept upon me and my friends. With the inexperience of half-grown boys and the single-mindedness of idealists, our youthful minds tried to work out the fate of Germany.

I HEAR OF NATIONAL-SOCIALISM

Then one day Karl, an older cousin of mine, who had the reputation in the family of being a daredevil, told me about Adolf Hitler and the National-Socialist German Workers' Party with their program of nationalism and socialism combined. I liked his vivid descriptions and passionate avowals. When I told others about it, they laughed at me and warned me not to believe in such nonsense.

In November 1923 the Hitler *Putsch* took place in Munich. For the second time I heard the name of Adolf Hitler, this time on everyone's tongue. My cousin Karl, who had meanwhile become a member of the National-Socialist German Workers' Party, together with

the able-bodied National-Socialists of our town, stood ready to rush to the aid of their comrades in Munich or to grasp the torch of revolution and to carry it on. But nothing came of it.

The ensuing Hitler trial finally supplied me with a clear picture of what had happened in Munich and of the goal Adolf Hitler had in mind. My mother, like my father who had died in the meantime, always tried to encourage in us children the love for all that was German. She was so enthusiastic about Adolf Hitler that she voted for the National-Socialist Party at the next Reichstag elections. Soon, however, one heard no more about Adolf Hitler and his Party, for he was taken to the fortress of Landsberg and his party prohibited. In our family, Karl, who had meanwhile become a university student, kept the National-Socialist flame burning. In me he found his most ardent listener, while other members of the family and friends either laughed at him or reviled him.

YOUTHFUL ARDOR

When the Party was founded again in 1924, I was still too young to join it. But now, stimulated by good instruction in history at school, I began seriously to study political books and pamphlets. My mother had often to remind me to devote more attention to my school-books than to the newspapers. I used to meet friends to discuss all sorts of subjects. We attended political meetings of all parties and read newspapers of all tendencies.

Since Adolf Hitler's movement was still limited mainly to the southern parts of Germany and to Austria, there were hardly any National-Socialist meetings in our town. As a substitute I regularly read the *Völkische Beobachter*, at that time an unimpressive sheet of four pages, as well as many other publications and tracts. The ideas of National-Socialism brought me more and more under their spell. What I liked best was the association of socialist slogans with nationalism, as well as the *élan* behind these ideas. In my mind's eye I often saw

demonstrations in which not red flags but swastika flags were being carried, mass meetings at which not the phrases of international Marxist fraternization were being mouthed, but at which the theme was Germany, her internal reconstruction and her external liberation.

When I left high school I would have loved to become a soldier. But conscription had been prohibited in Germany by order of her enemies—with the enthusiastic assent of the Reds while the lukewarm middle classes looked on with indifference. The small professional army, the Reichswehr, did not attract me. I left my home town to study at the university of another large city.

I JOIN THE PARTY

Now I was my own master and I had only the one desire of becoming an active National-Socialist. The day after registration, I went to see the head of the National-Socialist student group, which consisted of about twenty students. I was immediately greeted as a comrade. That very evening I went with him to the local Party leader and filled out an application form for joining the Party. The local Party leader was a master carpenter in a large factory, a simple, intelligent man. In the evenings he was usually to be found at the "Party Office," which was in a back room of a poor but pleasant beer house not far from the center of the city.

I was about the three-hundredth member of the local Party group, which had been refounded not long before and which had sworn to unfurl the banner of National-Socialism over a city which at that time was one of the Reddest in Germany. A few days later, a closed meeting of the local Party members took place. I had the opportunity of meeting many of my new Party comrades. It was a motley crowd of students, workers, tradesmen, businessmen, and a few professional men. The majority were young men. Some of the fellows were pretty rough. My comrades fell into two definite but harmoniously united groups: men—at that time some of them quite

young men—who had participated in the Great War; and young fellows who, like myself, had grown up during the war and in the confusion of the postwar period and who had discovered or rediscovered in National-Socialism their faith in Germany.

THE STORM TROOPERS

"Of course you'll join the Storm Troopers," I was told, and that was also my intention. Every young, able-bodied Party member took it for granted that he should join the Storm Trooper detachments of the Party. The SA (*Sturmabteilung*—Storm Troop detachment) in our city numbered about one hundred men at that time. We did not possess any magnificent uniforms. The head of the *Frauenschaft* (the Party's Women's Organization), which consisted of about twenty-five members, made me a brown shirt and gave me an SA cap. I had already brought from home a pair of gray riding breeches which my father had used during the war, and a pair of old military boots belonging to my father.

The SA was led by a student, and the leader of my detachment was a laborer. War-time military ranks were disregarded. I was deeply impressed to see a doctor, for instance, who had been a captain in the war, willingly acknowledge as superiors two men who had not been at the front. We National-Socialists did not consider rank, birth, or position: the only thing that counted was willingness to serve and to bear responsibility. The SA was a political fighting- and propaganda-body, not a pseudo-army. We were not allowed to possess arms. Moreover, we did not wish through the illegal possession of arms to endanger the tender little shoot of the local Party group.

DUTIES OF A PARTY MEMBER

I was gradually drawn more and more into the rhythm of the National-Socialist movement. My studies which, like many of my comrades, I paid for in part by working on the side, had to be limited to the utmost. The Party was first in my thoughts in the morning and last in the evening or late at night.

Our chief aim was to attract the attention of the masses of our city towards ourselves. To this end we made use of the various means of propaganda. The activities of the Storm Troopers were at that time devoted almost entirely to protecting the meetings—which were at first small—to distributing tracts, and to propaganda marches on Sundays. What we wanted more than anything else was to win over the German worker, who was enmeshed in the delusions of Social-Democratic or Communist Marxism. For that reason we held most of our meetings in the workers' districts of the city. It was often difficult to hire a hall, for the owners feared for the destruction of their property as a result of brawls. The Sunday propaganda marches also led mainly through workers' districts.

We distributed tracts in larger and larger numbers. No one felt himself "above" this kind of work. I remember one evening when I sat with the local Party leader in the Party Office and a well-dressed man came in to apply for membership in the Party. Upon being asked in what way he thought he could serve the Party, he replied that he could, of course, only consider a "leading position." When he was requested by the Party group leader to present himself next Sunday for distributing tracts, he left the place full of indignation. We had no use for men like that. Everyone had to be prepared to do anything and to start from the very beginning. And if today I look back on my Party comrades of those days, I know that each of them was just as ready fearlessly to give his all for the movement.

STUDENTS AND WORKERS

How ridiculous seemed to us the reproach that we wanted to use the fist as an argument against brains! In closed Party meetings, called "discussion evenings," and in special courses for exceptionally talented Party members, the ideas of the movement were cultivated, added to, and forged into a sharp weapon in the struggle against our political opponents. We students especially saw our main task to lie in this direction.

In the course of this internal Party work in the earliest days of the movement, I discovered again and again that the student and the laborer were the most deeply interested and the most faithful National-Socialists. From the very beginning, the happy union between the class that daily came into contact at the universities with the precious spiritual endowment of our nation and the labor class, which had so long been neglected, determined the appearance of our Party group too. And it was this union which constantly renewed my faith in the mission of National-Socialism, which strives for the union of the entire nation.

I MEET ADOLF HITLER

In the meantime I had eagerly studied Adolf Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*, whose second part had just appeared. Soon my ardent desire to see and hear Adolf Hitler was to be fulfilled. Shortly after I joined the Party, a congress of all the leaders of the National-Socialist German Students' Federation met in our university town. About thirty students, "college group leaders" from all parts of Germany as well as Austria and the German universities of Czechoslovakia, came together. At that time I had become one of the closest collaborators of our own college group leader. We met for almost a week, often spied upon by the suspicious police, smiled at by most of the students and the Reds. We discussed questions of organization, amongst which those of finance took up most of our time, for we had almost no money at all.

Then the Reich Leader of the National-Socialist Students' Federation announced that Adolf Hitler would appear at the congress and speak. The government of the German state to which our city belonged still forbade Adolf Hitler to speak in public, so that the meeting had to be held behind closed doors. This had for me the advantage that I could observe Adolf Hitler from close by. We were all filled with suspense as we sat that evening in a hotel room and waited for Adolf Hitler to arrive. I could hardly curb my impatience to see

the man who stood in our eyes for National-Socialism and Germany. At last he entered the room. He was dressed in a blue suit, as he generally was in those days. His eyes showed an expression of kindness and determination at the same time. For the first time I saw the head that is so familiar to all of us today and that now bears the marks of later successes and worries.

ADOLF HITLER SPEAKS

Then Adolf Hitler spoke. In my school-boy days I had already heard many well-known men speak: clergymen, politicians, and statesmen. But none spoke like Hitler. His passionate belief in his words, his obsession for the rebirth of our nation, his mastery of the topic, his brilliant oratory, convinced and captivated me for the rest of my life. I do not deny that I was prejudiced in favor of Adolf Hitler, since I had given my bond to him and his movement. But after at last having seen Adolf Hitler at close quarters and having heard him speak, my prejudice could only be fortified. For our prejudice was a manifestation of our faith in this man and his doctrine, an indication of the strength of our movement, not of weakness. My first encounter with Adolf Hitler irrevocably confirmed me in my passion and determination to do my bit towards making his movement, our movement, which at that time seemed so insignificant, the destiny of Germany. For us, Adolf Hitler stood above any discussion.

After the speech, which lasted about two hours, the Reich leader of the Students Federation called for three cheers for "our great *Führer* (leader)." The designation of "*Führer*" for Adolf Hitler was not generally used in the Party until later. In 1934 it was made Adolf Hitler's official title. In the old days we usually spoke of him as "the boss" or simply as Adolf Hitler. We addressed him as "Herr Hitler."

Soon the ban which forbade Adolf Hitler to speak in public was lifted in all German states. Year in and year out, Adolf Hitler now traveled throughout

Germany and gradually roused the conscience of the German people with his powerful speeches. At the same time, we carried out his will in laborious detail work wherever we had been placed.

Meanwhile twelve National-Socialist deputies had been elected into the Reichstag, among them Goering, Goebbels, and Frick. The masses began to take more and more interest in our movement. It was now a matter of increasing the impetus gained by the Party in our Red city. The local Party group had grown to more than a thousand members, and the SA to several hundred men.

Leading National-Socialists frequently came to us and spoke to the crowds in large halls. But these men could not go everywhere. They simply did not have the time. Consequently, a host of speakers of the movement was gradually trained, men from all classes who had the stuff in them to explain to others the idea of National-Socialism and the political aims of Adolf Hitler or to act as opposition speakers in the meetings of our opponents.

MY MAIDEN SPEECH

"You must go to a neighboring town this evening," the local Party group leader said to me one day at noon, "and speak at a meeting there. The speaker who was to do the job is sick." I hesitated at first, for I had never spoken in public. But then I consented and took the train to the little town near our city, which was also either Red or indifferent. At the station I was met by the Party group leader of the town, a young laborer from one of the large industrial plants. There had hardly been any National-Socialist meetings here before. Posters advertising the meeting were stuck on the billboards and walls of the poorly illuminated little town.

At the meeting place, the hall of a restaurant, all Party members were present as well as about two hundred other people, many of them farmers from the surrounding villages. The Communists and Social-Democrats had sent "listeners." A few Storm Troopers stood at

the entrance of the hall and at the speaker's platform. After a few words of introduction by the local Party group leader, I made the first speech of my career, my theme being: "What does Adolf Hitler want?" The Red listeners interrupted me frequently. However, I possessed not only the passion of a convinced National-Socialist but also the necessary political knowledge to silence them. At that time it was mainly a matter of making the slowly awakening masses in the provinces acquainted with us and with our program. After the speech there was a lively discussion with men who were interested, skeptical, or antagonistic. And there were also some new applications for membership.

POLITICAL SPEAKERS

From now on I was one of the speakers of our district, and with scores of other speakers I traveled around my native province to speak at innumerable meetings. Speeches! Everyone knows that the German people are not as rich in rhetorical talent as some other countries. How difficult many of us find the smooth flow of a public speech! It is a characteristic of the National-Socialist movement that it has granted a special position to the public speech in the battle for the German nation. Adolf Hitler's power of speech and its magic force, the importance he attached to the spoken word, have spurred on many old Party members to sharpen their weapons of speech and to go out with them into the smallest villages to destroy the enemy, to attract the curious, to shake the indifferent, to strengthen the doubting, and, above all, to gain new Party members, or at least followers.

Election periods of all kinds gave us ample opportunity to place the power of speech at the service of our cause. We speakers could never cease to school ourselves, keeping a sharp eye on all political happenings, especially in our own spheres of interest, and closely following them in the newspapers of all trends and parties. We were sent around according to carefully worked out plans of the local and provincial Party headquarters, and we

were also made to attend meetings of our opponents in order to participate in the discussions. Nothing pleased me more than to disprove the arguments of an opposing speaker or even turn an opponent's meeting into a National-Socialist one.

STONES AND DAGGERS

In this way one year followed another in tireless political struggle. The dream of my boyhood days began to become reality. Although there were still vast crowds which, on May 1 or November 9 or on other occasions, marched behind the red flags or remained indifferent, we too were mobilizing larger and larger masses and bringing them out into the streets. We demonstrated, not for international Marxist slogans, but for a new Germany. "The hand which is stretched out to us we shall grip; the fist which is raised against us we shall break open," Adolf Hitler had once said. We wanted to win over the Germans, above all the German workmen.

When our opponents, especially the Reds, saw our movement growing and their usurped right to the streets being threatened, their mockery soon turned into vicious hatred. The "Red Front Fighters Association," the fighting organization of the Communist Party of Germany, began its criminal activities which reached our city and province too. The time came when our meetings were more and more often attacked by Communist detachments. Soon the "Reich Banner Black-Red-Gold," the fighting organization of the Social-Democrats, began to follow this practice. Of course we had no intention of retreating before these mobs. Many a meeting in which I spoke, many a propaganda march in which I participated, ended in bloody battles with the Reds. We made good use of our belts and of broken-off chair-legs against an enemy whose favorite weapon was the dagger.

I shall never forget a great stone-throwing battle, which was characteristic of our clashes with the Reds. In a place near our city, a friend and I were to

speak one evening at a large meeting. We had been informed that something was brewing and so had received two SA detachments, among them my old detachment, to reinforce the local Storm Troopers. When the local SA together with our reinforcements, altogether about 250 men, marched out of a side street into the market place on its way to the meeting hall, a large mob of Communists suddenly broke out of another side street and greeted us with a hail of stones. They tore up the loose pavement to provide themselves with new "ammunition." We replied to this stone barrage and forced the Communists back into the side streets until a police emergency squad arrived and hauled the stone tossers out of their hiding places. Several of the men in our ranks were gravely injured, and one of them died while being carried home.

One of the Communists' most cowardly habits was that of attacking single Brown-shirts. It often happened that, on the day following a meeting, we heard of an SA comrade who, walking home alone, had been ambushed by a mob of Communists and stabbed to death.

THE FIRST GREAT PARTY RALLY

Sometimes we anxiously asked: "Shall we be able to make it? Are we going to win? Are we going to win *soon*?" The growing Red terror and the increasing enslavement of Germany, which had reached its peak in the Dawes and Young Plans, gave rise to doubts. But only in the case of weaklings do doubts lead to despair; in strong minds they lead to still stronger determination. And we felt strong.

Two great experiences, which to me seemed to be the most outstanding in the period of struggle, confirmed us in our conviction that we were on the right road: the Reich Party Day of 1929 in Nuremberg, and the first great Reichstag election victory in 1930. Many of our readers will have participated in or seen newsreels of one of the huge Party rallies that have taken place in Nuremberg since 1933. Nevertheless, I am con-

vinced that, for us Party veterans, the Party meeting of 1929 left the deepest impression, although no more than about 50,000 National-Socialists, mostly Storm Troopers, from outside Nuremberg took part. The difficulties that had to be overcome have vanished since 1933 and are almost all forgotten.

For the first time, Adolf Hitler's voice echoed throughout Germany and beyond. Communist criminals tried to interfere with this Party meeting too, and stabbed several of our Party comrades. On that occasion, a mutual friend and Party comrade introduced me to Horst Wessel, the Berlin Storm Troop leader and student who was shortly afterwards brutally murdered by Communists. "*Die Fahne hoch*," the song he wrote, was first sung in Nuremberg by the Berlin SA. It soon became the song of the movement, and since 1933 it has been the second German national anthem.

THE 1930 ELECTION

There is a bridge leading from the Party Meeting of 1929 to the Reichstag election of 1930. Up to 1929 we had advanced along a road which, although laborious, was comparatively smooth. Now we stood on the bridge and had at last aroused the attention of millions of Germans. Beneath us flowed the torrent of hostile feelings, from rejection to murder, which threatened to destroy us. After the return from Nuremberg, we had with renewed force to strive towards our goal: to seize power in Germany. The system of parliamentary democracy, the political foundation of the Germany of those days, offered us weapons which we now added to those we already had been using.

Not long afterwards, the German Reichstag was once again dissolved. A battle for votes began in which we summoned every ounce of strength at our disposal. One meeting followed upon the heels of another wherever German people lived together in towns or villages. For weeks on end I did not sleep more than three or four hours a day.

On September 14, 1930, the election took place. In the evening, vast crowds filled the squares of our city, where the incoming election results from all parts of Germany were projected on large screens. Now and again, the names of those German towns appeared where the Red poison seemed ineradicable, or where bourgeois smugness turned up its nose at "radicalism, right or left," and where it had been a hard struggle to force an entry for National-Socialism. And when a town of this kind suddenly appeared on the screen as a hopeful new offspring of National-Socialism, there was no end to the applause from our ranks, which stood well distributed among the crowds in the squares. The Reds, too, had spread their ranks among the crowds, and their shouts echoed back in answer to ours.

Late at night the final result became known: we had 107 deputies in the Reichstag! Approximately one fifth of all Germans entitled to vote had heard us, believed us, and voted for us! 107 deputies, all picked men from our foremost ranks, would now have a free pass to travel all over Germany in order to wrestle for the soul of the German people at new meetings, in order to make a quarter out of the fifth, a third out of the quarter, a half out of the third, and out of the half a whole nation! This was only the beginning!

ON THE WAY TO POWER

The road to power which we had to take on September 14 rose steeply before us. But the gate had been opened. Germany and the world, whether they liked it or not, had to take notice of us. Adolf Hitler, who never allowed himself to be elected to the Reichstag, was about to mature from a Party leader into a people's tribune. On his political journeys throughout Germany he often came to our city. We had to hire bigger and bigger meeting halls. More and more people wanted to hear him. But the opposition of our enemies also increased—that of the Government, with its increasingly rigorous police methods, as well as that of the Communists. The number of dead in our ranks rose to ter-

rifying heights in 1931. Two great hostile camps began clearly to crystallize in Germany: on the one side the National-Socialists, on the other the Communists.

Thus we went forward with swelling ranks against obstacles that sometimes seemed insurmountable, into the battle of 1932 that was to decide the political fate of Germany. There was an atmosphere of civil war over Germany. The SA, the steel skeleton of the National-Socialist Party, had meanwhile been prohibited by the governments of some of the German states. We knew that we were not to be beaten by such methods. If they made us take off our brown shirts, very well, then we would put on white ones. After all, it was the man in the shirt who mattered. Many of these men had only joined us after the 1930 election success, and some were former Communists. But such things were unimportant. What we wanted was to attract the best and the bravest from all camps.

WORRIES AND DOUBTS

The year 1932 made the highest demands on us and led us right into the great crisis of the German nation and of our Party. The presidential election necessitated by the expiry of President von Hindenburg's term of office, an election at which Adolf Hitler was one of the candidates, did not bring us the success we had hoped for. The subsequent Reichstag election even led to a loss in votes. In the meantime, the Reich Party headquarters had sent me abroad with a mission requiring some time. However, my travels often led me back to Germany.

Adolf Hitler twice refused the President's offer of the post of Vice-Chancellor. All or nothing! Chancellor or leader of the greatest opposition movement in Germany! There were doubters and tempters in our own ranks: "Don't you think it would have been better for the Führer to have accepted the post of Vice-Chancellor? From there it is only a short step to the job of Chancellor. But now perhaps everything is lost. Perhaps all was in vain—the battle, the sacrifice of the best years of your lives."

It was necessary to keep a clear head, to close our ranks, here to help a brave man who stumbled, there to bring a coward to his senses, or here to shut the mouth of a grumbler. Since Adolf Hitler spent almost all of his time in Berlin, we knew that something great was afoot in politics. Our anxiety was dispelled by our faith in the superiority of our National-Socialist principles and in our leader, who was about to surmount all obstacles with calm assurance.

JANUARY 30, 1933

Shortly after Christmas 1932, one of my short visits to Germany had come to an end again. I left the country with anxiety in my mind and faith in my heart. At the station, some old fellow Party veterans saw me off. "You'll be back, won't you, when things get started? It can't be long now," they said to me. We shook hands with a firm belief in victory.

In the foreign city to which I went we had, of course, also a local Party group, whose deputy leader I was. On January 30, 1933, I was just having lunch at the "German House" when the manager, a Party member, asked me to come to the telephone: the local Party group leader wished to speak to me. I went to the telephone and heard the voice of the Party group leader saying: "Well, what do you say now?" I did not know what he meant and asked: "What has happened?" "The Führer has just been made Chancellor!" the group leader replied. I felt as if I would burst with happiness and emotion.

We hastily made all the necessary preparations for calling a meeting in the "German House" of all Germans in the city in order to celebrate the great event. Meanwhile, the news vendors were already calling out the first "extras," which told the foreign city of what had happened in Germany.

On the following day I returned to Germany. In the first large German town in which I stopped over, the swastika flag was just being hoisted over the town hall to the rejoicing of great crowds.



In my old university city, friends and Party veterans met me at the station. They had to tell me in detail everything that had happened on January 30. "But you haven't missed everything," one of them finally said, "we're still cleaning up here." The Reds still had their strongholds at several places in the city in which we suspected secret arsenals. One of these strongholds, the large party bureau of the Social-Democrats, had still

to be taken by the SA and the police, who had meanwhile taken the oath on of allegiance to Adolf Hitler. I rejoined the ranks of my old Storm Troop detachment. The Red building, a symbol of their rule in our city, was taken after a short, persistent attack. That was the end of the *Kampfzeit* (period of struggle).

THE BATTLE CONTINUES

We shall never be able to cease wrestling for the soul of our nation, with ourselves, and against outer enemies. That is life. But the period of struggle we

old National-Socialists talk of was ended on January 30, 1933, and in the ensuing weeks of cleaning up the Red terror and the democratic-parliamentarian misrule in Germany. For us it was a unique experience, a war for Germany lasting many years, a war for her inner freedom and thus for the fundamental condition of her outer freedom.

Since January 30, 1933, we have had to build up a new State. No one could have started this work with more passionate enthusiasm than those who had for years been fighting for this State. Our reward? No one has asked for it. Adolf Hitler had become the leader of the German nation, and the German nation had become National-Socialist! That is the highest reward for every Party veteran. We still form a sworn brotherhood. We do not consider ourselves any better than those who joined us later or after we had won victory. Our one desire has always been to gain more fellow combatants and believers in National-Socialism.

A few months later the Führer awarded a Party badge with golden oak leaves to his oldest comrades. The district leaders

handed them over in the name of the Führer. For this purpose the district leader of our city, our old Party group leader, assembled us in a small place near the city which we had fought for with special obstinacy. The old crowd of a few hundred came together again. We were all overcome by emotion, although we all tried to hide it behind gaiety. Many an old veteran was in his grave, stabbed by the Reds or mortally wounded. Many of us had moved to other places. But the majority of these had joined their old comrades on this day of honor. The Führer had made arrangements for everyone to be decorated at his old battleground. At the close of the ceremonies, we sang the national anthem, the Horst Wessel song, and our old battle song: "*Wir sind die Sturmkolonnen.*"

What was the best time of my life? The fighting days in the old university city! It is that town and my old comrades that I silently yet vividly remember on every January 30. It is the spirit of these old comrades that is the most decisive influence in the present war of liberation of the German nation reborn in National-Socialism.

